

## CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED

From its earliest beginnings in 1792, the role of parks and open space as an amenity for all citizens has been central to the vision of the City of Raleigh. Through Raleigh's three centuries of growth and change, parks have played a prominent role in the City's development. The earliest parks within Raleigh were a result of the first planners' commitment to providing space for "future parks for children, flowers, trees and fountains". Today, that sentiment, of providing parks for residents to enjoy today while reserving space for future generations is alive and well. The City of Raleigh has now entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a vibrant community that serves as the nucleus for a growing region. Though parks and recreation facilities in Raleigh have gone through many changes throughout the centuries, from the parks of the early 1900's designed for the "social stroll" to modern day aquatic centers, science education and computer learning labs, they remain a vital part of the City's infrastructure. In the late 1800's the Victorian idea of "green relief" from the urban chaos spurred growth and development of the City's land where citizens could relax and enjoy nature within the City. This ideal is still relevant today. With open space continuing to disappear at rapid rates and increased environmental concerns and regulations, the people of Raleigh must become stewards of the land in order to ensure that future generations will have both recreational opportunities and sustained health of the City's remaining natural areas.

The purpose of the Parks, Recreation and Greenways Element of the Comprehensive Plan, referred to as the *Parks Plan*, is to set a framework for City park planners to use as they chart the course for the programming, maintenance and development of the park system over the coming two decades. Facilities identified within the Parks Plan are recognized as being as important as other elements of the City's infrastructure. This component of the Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a working document that grows and evolves as the park system develops and changes. Included within this plan are recommendations for new park development, maintenance, and continued renovation of existing parks and facilities, and guidelines that will allow the system to provide ample recreational opportunities for all citizens while remaining flexible to change with recreational trends, significant development opportunities and Raleigh's growing population. With these guidelines and recommendations, City park planners and other City officials will be able to work towards providing recreation facilities that create a balanced system across the community and that responds to the varied needs of residents.

This Parks Plan builds on previous plans stretching back over six decades. Master plans for the City parks and recreation system were prepared in 1950, 1960, 1979, 1990 and most recently in 2001. These plans have tracked, analyzed and guided the growth of the City parks system. The current plan in use, which is a 2001 update of the 1990 plan, addressed population figures, annexations, and updated Urban Service Areas. This Parks Plan adds recommendations for facility fee structure revisions, environmental stewardship, and updated Level of Service. Using a combination of national planning guidelines in combination with broad community and City input, and a participation preference survey, the 2003 Parks Plan provides the City with a vision for its park system to the year 2025 and the opportunity to retain the notion of Raleigh as a "park with a city in it" for future generations.